

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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That Wonderful Gift

Nothing equals in superlative interest that little, smiling, cherubic figure in the cradle, whose chubby hand grips your heart, whose laughter makes all the others laugh, a treasure, a dear, a never failing source of joy, God's great gift to you. But think, he is not merely a pet, and his mission is not simply to make life for you for a while brighter and happier. He is immortal. Listen! He has just entered upon the beginning of an eternity, and you are perhaps to decide for him what that eternity of his is to be. Now the beginnings of life are simpler than we think, and at the commencement of every moral, responsible existence there are a few simple, determining principles upon which results for all the succeeding ages depend. First, your own life is ordered upon right principles, else God help that little one to whom his indulgent parent may become his worst enemies. Have you never found God in your own hearts, have you never known him, are you living under the death shadow of this world, and the doom shadow of the judgment to come? Behold, you are leading that little one along into the same awful darkness. There is no hope at the end for you, no solace for life's manifold sorrows, no joy, no love, no safe home opening its doors, and beckoning you into its portals of light and gladness. Into the same destiny you are leading that cherub boy. To abandon him in a howling wilderness would not be more cruel. Your course toward him is not less disastrous to his welfare and his happiness because the great mistake is hidden by the glamour of your unquestionable love. Oh, if you have never found God before, never set out for eternal life, never provided a home in the everlasting mansions, do it now for the sake of that little one whose pattering footsteps journey with you, his hand resting confidingly in yours. Why should you betray him? See, he is going where you are going. Whither goest thou? But then if you have already ordered your own life according to the will of God, be careful to

add precept to example, as often as the right opportunity comes. Upon one point in your discipline perhaps the whole future destiny of that child hinges, and that is the habit of parental obedience. There are two ways of forming in your child that indispensable habit. The first is, to be yourself worthy of obedience,—to be so just and equitable in your exactions, so wise, temperate, honorable and upright in all your dealings toward him that his sense of right and wrong is normally developed, and duty is reinforced by the very elements of strength and manliness which are reflected in your own character. The child who by a kindly but unvarying firmness is trained to walk habitually in the path of parental obedience will, so sure as the small stream flows into the wider river, eventually "run in the way of God's commandments."

On the other hand the innumerable ranks of the ungodly and unsaved are reinforced from undisciplined homes. How shall the child, the central idea of whose training from the cradle up has been irreverence and disobedience, afterward reverence and obey God? And what spectacle will be presented to a startled universe when in the day of doom millions of the despairing will cry out against those, we hardly dare name the relation, who set the little feet, when helpless and unsuspecting, in the way of destruction. God pity those whose parents have made it hard for them to be saved and easy to be damned. God have mercy upon those parents who have nothing in themselves, either in precept or example, to make obedience seem right and reasonable. Everything is wrong in that family where God is a stranger. It begins wrong, goes on wrong, ends wrong, and nothing but one of God's most astounding miracles can save a single one of its members from the common ruin. Oh, thou whose calling is to watch for souls, the home is your field. Do there thy work. Go into the homes of your people, of the unsaved around you, and take God with you, take Jesus, take the Holy Ghost. Cease that sin of common-place chatter when you enter that holy of holies, the home, for in it are the beginnings of eternal life.